

CITY OF MUSKEGON
HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
MINUTES

August 5, 2015

Chairperson J. Hilt called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. and roll was taken.

MEMBERS PRESENT: J. Hilt, S. Kroes, A. Riegler, L. Spataro, L. Wood

MEMBERS ABSENT: S. Radtke, excused; K. Panozzo

STAFF PRESENT: M. Franzak, D. Renkenberger

OTHERS PRESENT: D. Launstein, FRC&H Architects, 1515 Arboretum, Grand Rapids;
M. Ferriby, Hackley Library

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A motion to approve the regular meeting minutes of April 7, 2015 was made by S. Kroes, supported by J. Hilt and unanimously approved.

NEW BUSINESS

Case 2015-10 – 316 West Webster Avenue. Applicant: Hackley Public Library. District: National Register. Current Function: Institutional. M. Franzak presented the staff report. The applicant is proposing several renovations to the exterior of the building, including the following: 1) Exterior improvements to support ADA accessibility including renovated front steps, ramps and gathering/resting areas, 2) New grading and plantings to integrate ramps into the landscape, 3) Relocation of existing signage and flag pole, and 4) Additional materials anticipated to be concrete and color cast stone.

D. Launstein was the project architect. He stated that, in addition to the improvements listed in the staff report, they are requesting to replace windows in the library and the Torrent House located across the street at 315 W. Webster Ave. He stated that he would address the windows at the end of the presentation. He gave an overview of the project, which was to convert the main entrance of the library into a handicap-accessible entrance. Handicap access was currently located in the back of the building off the alley. Plans showed a 100-foot walkway and ramp leading from the rear parking lot to the front entrance, which would contain places for resting. Berms and plantings would be used to reduce the need for guard rails and help the ramp blend into the landscaping. Lighting would be unobtrusive and blend in historically. He explained that they would need to reconfigure the entrance to the library to accommodate the ramp and eliminate the large step at the front door. Renderings of the proposed new entrance showed the front steps shifted more toward the corner of the building, a flower bed with adjacent bicycle racks at the corner, and relocated light posts. D. Launstein estimated that they would need to move 4 or 5 of the granite retaining stones, but planned to use them elsewhere on the property, possibly as benches. They would also move the site's historic marker closer to the front sidewalk so it was more visible and relocate the flag pole to accommodate the new ramp. D. Launstein also stated that, although the library had received permission to install new mechanical

equipment in 2013, the work had not yet been done due to funding issues. They would like to complete that work now, in addition to the ramp and windows.

A. Riegler was opposed to the substantial alterations in the monument steps in the proposed new configuration, and asked if they had considered a more symmetrical entrance to the building to more closely match what was currently there. D. Launstein stated that they had considered different options, but felt that the one proposed was the best fit. L. Spataro stated that it was very difficult to make an old building ADA-compliant, and since there was a height difference between the landing and steps, some reconfiguration had to happen. He stated that dividing the stairway into 2 parts rather than 3 may make the new configuration more closely match the current one. A. Riegler asked what the railings would be made of. D. Launstein stated that they would be painted metal steel posts with decorative finials. A. Riegler also asked that the designers consider the landscape area in front so there wasn't a big blank space there in the winter. D. Launstein stated that they would be working with a landscape architect. L. Spataro asked what type of hardscape materials would be used. D. Launstein stated that they planned to use decorative concrete. L. Spataro pointed out the fact that the lower garden-level windows were being covered up with a berm, and was concerned about the lighting in library's basement rooms. Board members discussed the configuration of the basement and concurred that the lack of light from those windows shouldn't cause a problem. L. Spataro also stated that the elevation change made it appear that the building was shrinking. D. Launstein discussed some different options they had considered, and stated that they would use low plantings to minimize the appearance of a shrinking façade as much as possible.

D. Launstein discussed replacing the windows in the building, which was not listed on the HDC application. He stated that the windows dated to approximately 1987, and were dry-rotting. They wished to replace them with something closer in appearance to the original windows, and stated that they would have new windows custom-made to fit the existing masonry openings. He stated that the Torrent House across the street from the library was having the same problems with their windows, and they would like to replace those as well. L. Spataro stated that the HDC had previously allowed the replacement of non-original windows as long as the original window openings and configurations were retained. A. Riegler asked if they would be removing the original wood from the inside of the window frames. D. Launstein stated that they would not be removing the wood on the inside, but the trim on the outside windows would be aluminum clad, for durability.

Board members discussed the proposed changes. L. Spataro did not like the fact that the front ramp buried the building a bit, but he did not see a good alternative. A. Riegler discussed proposed language for the window replacement approval, and asked about the decorative windows on the two buildings. D. Launstein stated that any decorative, leaded, or stained glass windows would not be removed, only the ones with clear operable glass. On the Torrent House, nothing would be done with the addition, only the original main building. Board members concurred that there would be two motions: one for the ramp and design, and a separate motion for the windows.

A motion that the HDC approve the request for the exterior improvements as described, to include the handicap-accessible ramp with associated stairway reconfiguration and landscaping, as long as all zoning requirements are met and the necessary permits are obtained was made by S. Kroes, supported by L. Wood and approved, with J. Hilt, S. Kroes, L. Spataro, and L. Wood voting aye and A. Riegler voting nay.

A. Riegler asked what the timeline for window replacement was. D. Launstein stated that they planned to do the Torrent House this year, and the library next year. A. Riegler asked if the current windows were repairable. D. Launstein explained that storm windows had originally been put on the inside, causing substantial dry-rot on the outer window frames. The windows were now very degraded, and it was not feasible to try and repair them at this point.

A motion that the HDC allow the replacement of any existing, functionally operable windows located at the Hackley Library and Torrent House with aluminum-clad wood windows, with the following conditions: 1) that the original window configurations are maintained, 2) the original sight lines are maintained as closely as possible to the original, and 3) the interior wood trim is retained, was made by A. Riegler, supported by L. Spataro and approved, with J. Hilt, S. Kroes, L. Spataro, L. Wood and A. Riegler voting aye.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:25 p.m.